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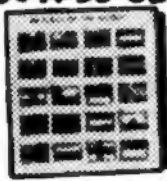
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Chapter 1. *Commando Course*

SERGEANT CRASH MORGAN, A REGULAR SOLDIER BEFORE THE WAR, HAD PASSED THOSE GRUELLING TESTS. AFTER SEVERAL RAIDS, HE WAS SELECTED AS AN INSTRUCTOR AT THE COMMANDO TRAINING CENTRE IN THE SCOTTISH HIGHLANDS. HE WAS THERE ON THAT MISTY DAY WHEN THE FIRST BATCH OF AMERICAN RANGERS ARRIVED, FOR TRAINING...



GRINNING, CRASH MORGAN WALKED UP TO THE WORRIED AMERICANS...



SEEING THEIR MISTAKE, THE AMERICANS LAUGHED, EXCEPT FOR THE AMERICAN SERGEANT, STAN MILLICK.

YOU'RE A JOKER, EH, LIMEY? JUST DON'T TRY ANY JOKES ON ME, THAT'S ALL. I DON'T LAUGH EASY...



IT WAS A SMALL INCIDENT, YET IT TOLD CRASH A LOT ABOUT THE CHARACTER OF THE NEWCOMER, MASTER SERGEANT STAN MILLICK OF THE RANGERS. HE WAS A DOUR MAN, WITH NO SENSE OF HUMOUR. ONE OF THE RANGERS SPOKE TO CRASH.

PETE FOLBY'S THE NAME, BUD. DON'T TAKE TOO MUCH NOTICE OF MILLICK. HE AIN'T A BAD GUY. I KNOW — I'M HIS BUDDY.



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THE NEXT COUPLE OF WEEKS WERE DYNAMITE. THE AMERICANS WERE OUT TO PROVE THAT THE BRITISH HAD NOTHING TO TEACH THEM — AND THE COMMANDOS WERE OUT TO PROVE THEY HAD PLENTY.

GET CRACKING, YOU BIG BABOONS! YOU'RE LIKE A LOT OF OLD WOMEN WITH FRACTURED ELBOWS!



THEY TOOK THE RIBBING LIKE GOOD TROOPERS, ALL EXCEPT MILLICK. STRONG AND ALREADY WELL-TRAINED, IT SEEMED AS IF HE RESENTED BEING SENT ON THE COURSE. . .

GET BOTH HANDS ON THAT TOGGLE, MILLICK. THAT'S THE RULE HERE.



MILLICK TURNED, HIS FACE GRIM...

QUIT RIDING ME,
WILL YA? BACK
IN THE STATES I
COULD SLIDE THE
GRAND CANYON WITH
ONE HAND!



BUT NOBODY WAS ALLOWED TO BREAK
THE RULES IN CRASH MORGAN'S
SQUAD!

BACK IN THE
STATES YOU CAN BREAK
YOUR PERISHIN' NECK
FOR MY MONEY. BUT
HERE YOU'LL TAKE
ORDERS —

TAKE
YOUR MITTS
OFF ME,
BUD!



THE AMERICAN SWUNG INTO SPACE
ONLY ONE BIG MUSCULAR HAND
GRABBING THE TOGGLE. BUT
CRASH WAS ONLY TWO YARDS
BEHIND HIM.



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MORGAN WAS ALL SET TO GIVE MILLICK A VERBAL BLASTING, BUT COLONEL FROBISHER, THE COMMANDANT, WHO HAD BEEN WATCHING FROM THE BASE OF THE CLIFF, HAD ALREADY TAKEN OVER.



CRASH STILL RECEIVED A STIFF REPRIMAND, BUT MILLICK WAS LEFT IN NO DOUBT ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES OF BREAKING RULES AT THE CAMP. FINALLY, FROBISHER STALKED AWAY.



BUT MILLICK CONTINUED TO RIDE ROUGHSHOD OVER RULES HE DID NOT AGREE WITH. SOMETIMES, HE SUFFERED FOR IT...




AS THE BOATS SLOWLY EDGED ACROSS THE LOCH, THE MISTS RISING FROM THE WATER, MILLICK GROWLED AND RAISED HIMSELF FROM THE UNCOMFORTABLE CLOSELY PACKED POSITION IN THE BOTTOM OF THE CRAFT.




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NEAR THE LANDING BEACH, THE INSTRUCTORS BEGAN TO FIRE ON FIXED LINES, THE BULLETS WHINING WITHIN FEET OF THE ONCOMING BOATS...



GOOD GRIEF!
THAT BLOCKHEAD
MILICK'S PERCHED
ON THE EDGE OF THE
BOAT! HE'S ASKING
FOR IT!

MILICK SEEMED TO TREAT THE WHOLE AFFAIR WITH CONTEMPT. COLONEL FROBISHER, FURIOUS, GRABBED CRASH'S ARM.



MORGAN —
YOU'RE HANDY WITH
THAT RIFLE! GIVE
THAT FOOL THE SHOCK
OF HIS LIFE — REMIND
HIM TO KEEP UNDER
COVER.

IF YOU
SAY SO,
SIR!

CRASH'S BULLET SLAMMING INTO THE STEEL SIDE OF THE LANDING CRAFT A FRACTION OF AN INCH AWAY FROM MILICK MADE THE RANGER SERGEANT JUMP LIKE A STARTLED RABBIT!



EVEN PETE FOLEY, HIS BUDDY, WAS UNABLE TO KEEP THE GRIN OFF HIS FACE AS HE HELPED PULL THE SERGEANT BACK INTO THE BOAT.



CRASH WAS STILL LAUGHING WHEN STAN MILLICK CAME RAMPAGING ASHORE. BUT COLONEL FROBISHER'S FACE WAS BLEAK AND GRIM AS HE BROUGHT THE RANGER TO A SHARP HALT...



FOR A WHILE, AFTER THAT INCIDENT, THE RANGER SEEMED WILLING TO KEEP TO THE RULES, AND CRASH FOUND LIFE A LOT EASIER. AT LAST, THE RANGERS REACHED THE FINAL, AND TOUGHEST, EXERCISE OF THE COURSE.



THEY HAD BEEN TAKEN MANY MILES FROM THE CAMP AND DUMPED WAY OUT INTO THE HIGHLANDS.

IT'S SIMPLE, MILLICK. PAIR OFF WITH YOUR BUDDY, AND FIND YOUR OWN WAY HOME. USE YOUR COMPASS, LIVE ON THE COUNTRY, BUT GET BACK.

THIS IS KID'S STUFF! COME ON, PETE, LET'S GET OUT OF THIS DOGGONE PARADISE!

CRASH AND HIS FRIEND, JOCK McEWAN, WERE OLD HANDS AT THE GAME...

OKAY, CRASH — EVERYBODY'S OUT OF SIGHT, NOW. LET'S LEG IT FOR THE RAILWAY LINE.

IT WAS A SIMPLE COMMANDO TRICK — FIND THE NEAREST RAILWAY LINE AND THERE YOU WOULD FIND THE QUICKEST AND MOST LEVEL WAY HOME.

THERE'S THE TRACK. I WONDER HOW MANY OF THE RANGERS CAUGHT ON?

A COUPLE OF 'EM AT LEAST. THERE'S A PAIR AHEAD OF US — PACING THE SLEEPERS.

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AT THAT MOMENT, THE NIGHT WAS SPLIT BY THE PIERCING WHISTLE OF AN APPROACHING TRAIN, GRADUALLY GATHERING SPEED AFTER CLIMBING UP A STEEP GRADIENT.

YOU MAKE THINGS TOO EASY, LIMBY. HERE COMES A TRAIN! HOW ABOUT IT, PETE? YOU GOING TO JUMP IT WITH ME?

DON'T DO IT, MILLICK! BY THE TIME IT GETS HERE, IT'LL BE GOING TOO FAST FOR YOU TO JUMP IT!

CERTAINLY THE RULES SAID ANY WAY HOME, BUT BOARDING A FAST FREIGHT TRAIN IN THE HALF DARKNESS COULD BE SUICIDE! CRASH FELT RESPONSIBLE AS THE SENIOR MAN THERE.

LOOK, YANK, THIS IDEA IS CRAZY! WE LIKE TO KEEP THE TRAINING CASUALTIES DOWN TO A DECENT FIGURE—AND THIS WOULDN'T BE DECENT!

GETTING CHICKEN, LIMBY? IF IT AIN'T BREAKING ANY GOLDARNED RULE—THEN PETE AND ME'LL JUMP THE FREIGHT. OKAY, PETE?

OKAY WITH ME!



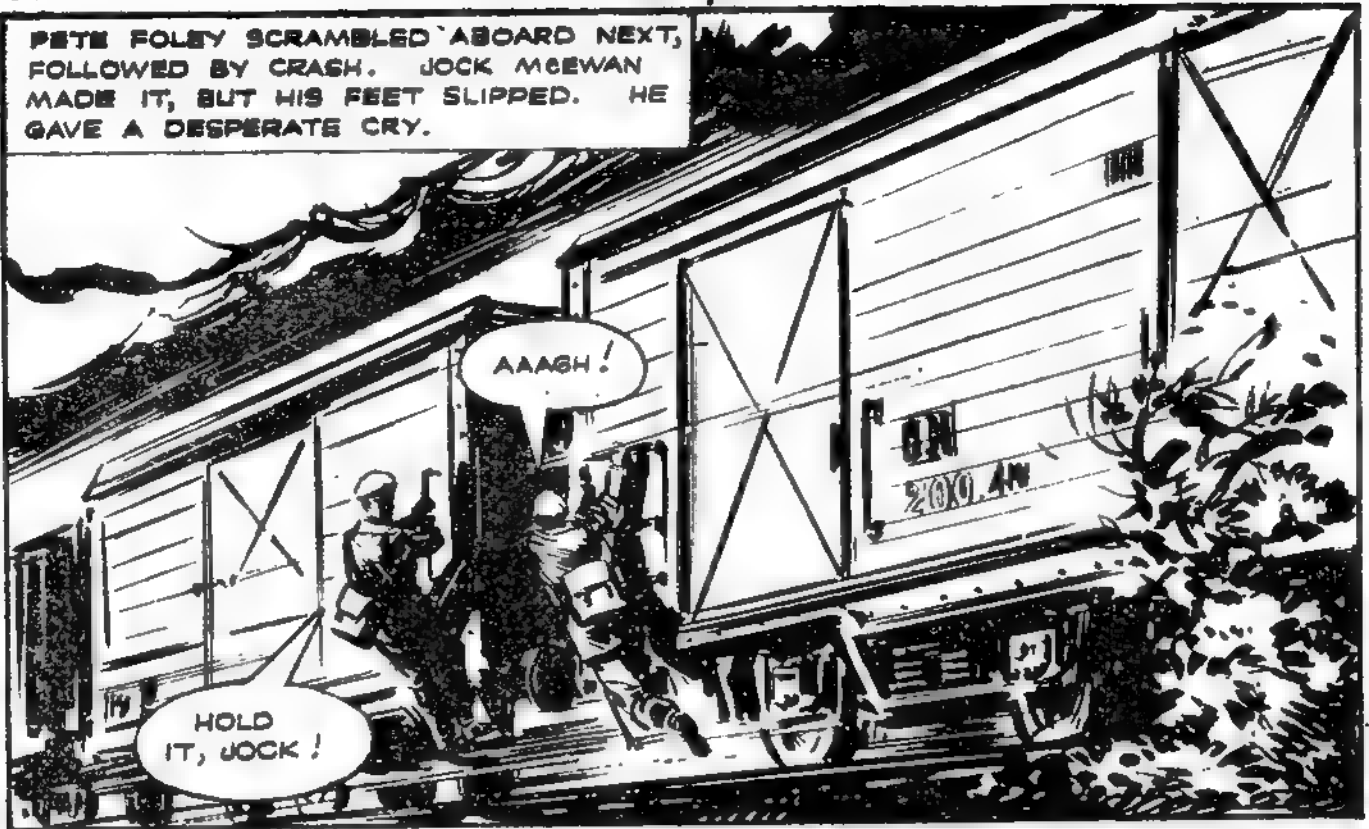
CRASH COULD IMAGINE THE SARDONIC SMILE ON MILLICK'S FACE WHEN HE AND JOCK EVENTUALLY TRUDGED BACK INTO CAMP, HOURS AFTER THE AMERICANS, IF THEY DID NOT JOIN THEM ABOARD THE TRAIN...



THE FOUR MEN STRUNG THEMSELVES ALONG THE SIDE OF THE TRACK AS THE STEAM-HISSING ENGINE CAME THUNDERING ALONG LIKE A JUGGERNAUT. MILLICK TOOK A FLYING GRAB AS THE WAGONS CAME SWAYING PAST, HIS APE-LIKE HANDS GRIPPING, HOLDING...



PETE FOLEY SCRAMBLED ABOARD NEXT, FOLLOWED BY CRASH. JOCK MCEWAN MADE IT, BUT HIS FEET SLIPPED. HE GAVE A DESPERATE CRY.



FOR FIVE BREATH-TAKING SECONDS, THE SCOTSMAN, HUNG BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH BY HIS FINGER-TIPS. CRASH GOT A GRIP ON HIS WRIST AND CALLED ON EVERY OUNCE OF HIS WHIP-STEEL STRENGTH TO HOLD JOCK UP. AT LAST THE OTHER MANAGED TO GET A FIRM GRIP...



THEY RELAXED IN THE TARPULIN-COVERED WAGON AS THE TRAIN RATTLED ON THROUGH THE DARKNESS. MILES FARTHER ON, IT SLOWED, APPARENTLY IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE.

THERE'S NO STATION HERE.

THERE'S A LIGHT AHEAD, THOUGH. IT'S A WATER-POINT. THEY'LL BE FILLING THE TANKS...



THE WATER POINT WAS ALSO THEIR WATERLOO. THE IRATE GUARD HAD SEEN THEM BOARDING THE TRAIN AND HAD TAKEN A SERIOUS VIEW OF IT. . .

COME DOWN HERE, THE LOT OF YE! I SAW YE TRYING TO BREAK YE'RE STUPID NECKS!



THERE WAS STILL TEN MILES TO GO. AFTER TAKING SUCH A CHANCE BOARDING THE TRAIN, IT SEEMED A PITY TO BE KICKED OFF SO CLOSE — BUT CRASH COULD SEE THE GUARD'S POINT OF VIEW...



THE RANGER, IGNORING THE ANGRY GUARD, WENT TO CLIMB BACK ON TO THE TRAIN.



AS THE OBSTINATE GUARD HUNG ON, MILLICK'S SELF-CONTROL SNAPPED. WITH A GROWL IN HIS THROAT, HE SWUNG A VICIOUS RIGHT AT THE OLDER MAN.



CRASH MORGAN HAD HAD ENOUGH OF THE MOROSE, DIFFICULT AMERICAN. THIS FLAGRANT SHOW OF BAD TEMPER WAS TOO MUCH. BUT A FIERY SCOT GOT THERE BEFORE CRASH...



MILLICK HELD JOCK OFF WITH THE AIR OF A MAN WHO REALISES HE HAS GONE TOO FAR.



COOL DOWN, FELLER. I'M NOT PICKING A FIGHT WITH YOU...

BUT YOU ARE WITH ME, MILLICK! YOU'VE GOT A LESSON COMING TO YOU, CHUM!

THE TRAIN WAS LATE, AND LOOKED LIKE BEING LATER! THE ENGINE CREW HAD NO INTENTION OF MISSING THIS FIGHT.

PETE SOLEY HARDLY KNEW WHOSE SIDE HE WAS ON! HE HAD BEEN MILLICK'S BUDDY SINCE THEIR EARLY RANGER DAYS, YET HE KNEW WHO WAS IN THE WRONG NOW...

LOOK, SARGE, STAN JUST GOT SORE AT THE OLD GUY. SURE, HE SHOULDN'T HAVE POKED HIM, BUT, SO WHAT?



FADE OUT, PETE. IF THE LIMY WANTS IT, HE CAN HAVE IT. HE'S BEEN RIDING ME JUST TOO LONG.

AH'M WAVING MA FLAG AND BLOWING MA WHISTLE! START THE TRAIN, WULLIE!



DEAF AND BLIND I AM, SANDY. I CANNA HEAR YE!

ASH GASPED AS A THUDDING FIST SUNK INTO HIS RIBS. HE CAME BACK WITH A FLAILING RIGHT THAT RIPPED INTO THE AMERICAN'S CHEEK. IT WAS A BATTLE OF GIANTS—

THEY'LL
MURDER EACH
OTHER!



MILICK WAS BIG, SOLID, LIKE THE GNARLED TRUNK OF A STRONG TREE — AND THAT WAS HIS UNDOING. CRASH WAS LIGHTER, QUICKER AND COULD HIT WITH AN ARM LIKE TEMPERED STEEL. . . BUT STILL IT . . . WAS A NEAR THING — CRASH WAS CLOSE TO EXHAUSTION BEFORE MILICK WAS OUT.

THAT'S MORE
THAN ENOUGH, CRASH!
HERE, PETE, GIVE US A
HAND WITH THE
MAN.

MILICK'S
GOING TO LOVE
THIS! BUT I
SHOULD WORRY!



THE GUARD REPENTED AND LET THEM RIDE AS NEAR AS THE LINE RAN TO THE CAMP. MILLICK RECOVERED AND SAT SILENT AND SLOWERING DURING THE TIME IT TOOK THEM TO GET THERE. WHEN THEY WALKED TO THEIR HUTS —



CRASH MADE ONE MORE EFFORT TO PATCH THINGS UP WITH MILLICK. BUT STILL MILLICK REFUSED TO ALTER HIS ATTITUDE OF SULLEN ENMITY. WHEN THE RANGERS FINALLY MARCHED TO REJOIN THEIR OWN FORCES, CRASH SIGHED WITH RELIEF.



Chapter 2. *Perilous Beach*

AFTER THEIR TOUR OF DUTY AS INSTRUCTORS, CRASH MORGAN AND JOCK McEWAN RETURNED TO ACTIVE SERVICE. IN THE MIDDLE OF 1943, THEY LANDED ON THE COAST OF YUGOSLAVIA TO ASSIST THE PARTISANS. . .



SLOWLY THE GUERRILLA BANDS HAD WINKLED THE GERMANS FROM THE HILLS OF THE INTERIOR, FORCING THEM TO THE COAST. NOW THEY HEDGED ROUND THE PORT OF DUBROVICK.



CRASH AND JOCK MGEWAN HAD FOUND A NEW FRIEND IN THE BOISTEROUS, FLAMBOYANT SLAV, JOSEF KREKIC. WITH HIM, THEY WATCHED THE ENEMY RETREATING BACK TO DUBROVICK.

THEY'VE GOT
THE WIND UP, ALL
RIGHT! SHOULDN'T BE
LONG BEFORE WE CAN
TAKE THE WHOLE
PORT!



THE CAPTURE OF THE PORT WOULD BE A VALUABLE VICTORY FOR THE PARTISANS — BUT DUBROVICK WOULD NOT FALL EASILY. THE GERMANS WERE PREPARING TO FIGHT BACK STRONGLY, AS CRASH DISCOVERED ON RETURNING TO THE CAMP A FEW DAYS LATER...

CAPTAIN ADAMS
WANTS TO SEE YOU,
PRONTO, CRASH!



CAPTAIN ADAMS' FACE WAS GRIM AS CRASH REPORTED TO HIM.

WE'VE HAD THE TIP-OFF THAT JERRY IS REINFORCING DUBROVICK BY SEA, SERGEANT. THAT'LL MAKE THINGS NASTY HERE...

CAN'T THE NAVY HANDLE IT, SIR?

THE NAVY MAY NOT BE ABLE TO GET HERE IN TIME. THE PLAN IS FOR HALF OF US TO STIR UP TROUBLE ON THE ISLAND OF BRIC, HOPING THE JERRIES MAY LAND THEIR REINFORCEMENTS THERE, INSTEAD OF BRINGING THEM STRAIGHT TO DUBROVICK.

THERE'S A GANG OF PARTISANS ON BRIC, BUT THEY'VE BEEN QUIET SINCE THE AMERICAN RANGERS PULLED OUT SIX MONTHS AGO. WE'LL TAKE KREKIC FOR LIAISON—AND A RANGER WHO'S BEEN THERE.

OKAY, SIR.

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THE RANGER HAD NOT JOINED THEM BY THE TIME THEY WERE READY TO LEAVE FOR BRIC. TIME WAS PRESSING IF THEY WERE TO REACH THE ISLAND BEFORE DAWN.

DARNED SLACKNESS, SERGEANT! THIS RANGER FELLOW WAS CLEARLY TOLD WHAT TIME WE'D BE LEAVING. . .

IT DOESN'T LOOK AS IF HE'S COMING, SIR. . .

THE REST OF THE COMMANDO BAND WAS ALREADY ABOARD THE FISHING BOAT.

WHY HAVE THIS RANGER, CAPTAIN? I, TOO, KNOW BRIC. YOU HAVE KREKIC — IT IS ENOUGH!

ALL RIGHT, KREKIC. COME ON, LET'S GET ON BOARD.



THEY HAD ROWED WELL AWAY FROM THE SHORE WHEN THEY HEARD A SHOUT, AND SAW A FIGURE STUMBLING DOWN THE STEEP PATH TO THE BEACH.



HEY!
HOLD IT!
WAIT FOR
ME!

LOUD -
MOUTHED IDIOT!
PULL BACK QUICK,
LADS, BEFORE HE
BRINGS THE JERRIES
ABOUT OUR EARS!

CRASH AND JOCK GOT THE SURPRISE OF THEIR LIVES WHEN THEY RECOGNISED THE NEWCOMER.



PETE
FOLEY! WHERE
THE HECK DID YOU
SPRING FROM?

CRASH -
JOCK! HEY,
IT'S GREAT TO
SEE YOU!

CUT THE
OLD COMRADES
ACT AND GET
IN THE BOAT!

LIKE THE BRITISH COMMANDOS, THE AMERICAN RANGERS WERE ENGAGED ON MANY MISSIONS BEHIND THE ENEMY LINES, IN GREECE, ITALY AND YUGOSLAVIA, AT THAT STAGE OF THE WAR.



WHAT HAPPENED TO THAT OPPO OF YOURS, PETE? OLD JOLLY BOY MILLICK, I MEAN...

HE'S THE REASON I VOLUNTEERED FOR THIS PARTY. HE GOT HIMSELF LOST ON BRIC!

PETE FOLEY TOLD HOW, WHEN THE RANGERS HAD WITHDRAWN FROM BRIC SIX MONTHS EARLIER, SERGEANT MILLICK HAD BEEN MISSING...

I COULD GET REAL SORE AT THAT GUY! YET, HE'S MY BUDDY SO I'VE GOT TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM...



MAYBE HE'S WITH THE LOCAL PARTISANS, PETE.

MAYBE. STAN'S GRANDAD CAME FROM THESE PARTS. THE FAMILY'S REAL NAME IS MILLIC. STAN SPEAKS THE LINGO, TOO.



THE MYSTERY OF SERGEANT MILICK WAS TEMPORARILY FORGOTTEN AS THEY NEARED THE DESERTED WEST COAST OF BRIC. THE SMALL TOWN WAS ON THE EAST SIDE, FACING THE MAINLAND. THE GERMAN CONVOY WOULD SAIL THROUGH THE BRIC CHANNEL ON ITS WAY TO DUBROVICK...

IT'S GOING TO BE TRICKY FINDING A LANDING ON THIS ROCKY COAST...

M'M! ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE UNLESS WE CAN FIND A GAP BETWEEN THE ROCKS LEADING TO A CLIMBABLE STRETCH OF CLIFF!



FOR A TIME THEY STARED WITHOUT HOPE, UNTIL CRASH SAW WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR... A CLEAR SMOOTH PATCH IN THE RIBBON OF WHITE FOAM...

THAT'S IT— WE'RE IN LUCK! D'YOU SEE IT, SIR? THAT'S OUR WAY THROUGH!



Crossfire

STEADYING ON THE NARROW GAP, THE BOAT RAN BRAVELY IN TOWARDS THE ISLAND. CRASH AND THE COMMANDOS WERE KEYED-UP AND READY IN THEIR MINDS TO TACKLE THE CLIFF, WHEN ADAMS YELLED A WARNING....

LOOK
OUT!



BETWEEN THE ROCKS BOBBED A BLACK, GLISTENING SHAPE — A MINE WHICH HAD DRIFTED FROM THE SHIPPING CHANNEL WHERE IT HAD BEEN LAID. NOW IT LAY READY TO DESTROY ANY VESSEL BRAVING THE NARROW GAP.

GO
ABOUT! QUICK
— BEFORE
IT'S TOO
LATE!

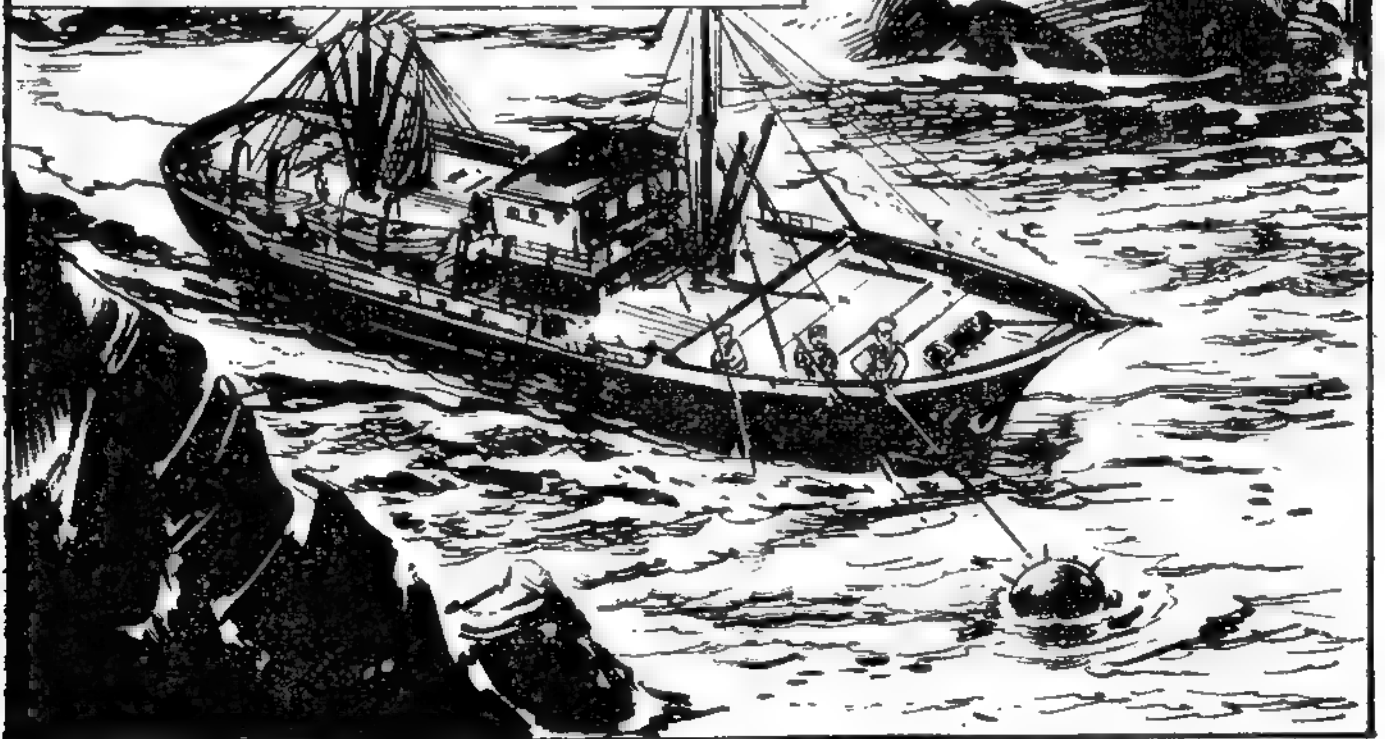
NO — KEEP
GOING!



IN THAT SPLIT-SECOND, CRASH REALISED THE CERTAIN DANGER OF TRYING TO ESCAPE. THE BOAT COULD NEVER LOSE WAY IN TIME, AND THE ROCKY FANGS COULD RIP THE BOTTOM OUT OF HER JUST AS EFFICIENTLY AS ANY MINE!



NOW WITH THE SWIRL OF RUSHING WATER UNDER HER THE BOAT RAN ON. POISED IN THE BOWS, CRASH STOOD READY WITH THE BEARING-OFF SPAR, HIS GAZE FOCUSED ON THE MINE...



THERE WAS A CLANG OF METAL AS CRASH THUDDED THE END OF THE SPAR ON TO THE BLACK CASING, CAREFULLY AVOIDING THE LETHAL HORNS. STUBBORNLY, THE HEAVY MINE SHIFTED AS HE PUSHED WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH.

PUSH! HOLD IT OFF— BUT DON'T TOUCH ANY OF THE HORNS!

OKAY!

THE MINE JERKED AND ROLLED AND TRIED TO CHEAT THEM. NO ONE ABOARD SEEMED TO BREATHE UNTIL THE FINAL NUDDGE FROM THE END OF AN OAR PUSHED THE MINE CLEAR— AND THEY WERE SAFELY THROUGH!

BOY, OH BOY! THAT'S THE FIRST TIME I'VE EVER PLAYED BASEBALL WITH A MINE!

ADAMS STEERED THE BOAT CAREFULLY BETWEEN THE JAGGED ROCKS, AND BEACHED HER ON A TONGUE OF PEBBLY BEACH, BENEATH THE TOWERING CLIFFS. HASTILY, THEY BEGAN TO UNLOAD THEIR WEAPONS AND SUPPLIES...



IN THE HALF MOONLIGHT, THE CLIFFS SEEMED DARK AND OMINOUS. THERE WAS NO SIGN OF A PATH UP TO THE PLATEAU ABOVE. EVEN PETE FOLEY, WHO HAD BEEN THERE BEFORE, COULD NOT HELP.



CAPTAIN ADAMS, EX-MOUNTAINEER AND THE MOST EXPERIENCED ROCK-CLIMBER OF THE PARTY, WENT ALONG THE BASE OF THE CLIFF AS FAR AS HE COULD. HE LOOKED FAR FROM HAPPY ON HIS RETURN...



THEY TRIED TO GET WHAT SLEEP THEY COULD. DAWN WAS STREAKING THE EASTERN SKY, WHEN THEY SPRANG UP, STARTLED INTO WAKEFULNESS. A SHOWER OF STONES HAD BOUNCED DOWN THE ROCK FACE.



ADAMS CURSED INWARDLY. TO BE DISCOVERED SO EARLY ON THEIR MISSION COULD BE DISASTROUS. HE HELD HIS FIRE AS THE SHOWER OF STONES WAS FOLLOWED BY A BREATHLESS, STRANGELY FAMILIAR FIGURE !

KREKIC ! - WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU DOING ? WE COULD HAVE SHOT YOU !

UGH !



YOU PERISHIN' OLD MOUNTAIN GOAT ! YOU DESERVE ALL YOU'VE GOT !

THE IMPETUOUS PARTISAN, CONVINCED HE COULD DO MOST THINGS BETTER THAN HIS BRITISH ALLIES, HAD MADE A LONE ATTEMPT AT SCALING THE CLIFF !

OOH ! MY NECK - SHE IS BROKE ! MY LEGS - THEY ARE WORN OUT ! I ACHE, MY COMRADES !




WHEN THEY HAD SATISFIED THE BIG SLAV THAT HE WAS MORE BRUISED THAN BROKEN, THEY WATCHED CAPTAIN ADAMS BEGIN THE PERILOUS CLIMB...



IT WAS A CLIMB IN WHICH DEATH HUNG UPON EVERY FINGER-HOLD. A LOOSE ROCK, A SLIPPING BOOT, AND ADAMS WOULD HAVE CRASHED TO THE ROCKS BELOW.




ONCE HE SLIPPED, TWICE HE GROPPED FOR A FOOTHOLD THAT ELUDED HIM. BUT FINALLY HE REACHED THE SUMMIT. AT LAST, HE LET DOWN HIS THIN ROPE. CRASH TIED THE NYLON ROPE TO IT, AND ADAMS PULLED UP THE STRONGER LINE AND MADE IT FAST.



PETE - FOLLOW JOCK. THEN WE'LL SEND UP THE GEAR. MAKE IT QUICK! THAT JERRY CONVOY'S DUE FAST AT SEVEN TONIGHT AND WE'VE A LOT TO DO YET.

WHEN ALL THE MEN AND GEAR WERE SAFELY UP ON THE PLATEAU, ADAMS GAVE HIS NEXT ORDER.



THE NEXT THING IS TO GET TO THE WEST OF THE ISLAND, READY TO RAISE HELL IN THE PORT JUST BEFORE SEVEN. FOLEY - YOU'RE THE GUIDE FROM NOW ON.

SURE, CAPTAIN.

Chapter 3. *Strange Encounter*

A WIRELESS MESSAGE TOLD THEM THAT NOTHING HAD CHANGED. THE GERMAN CONVOY WAS REPORTED STEAMING SOUTH AND BRITISH NAVAL UNITS WERE HEADING NORTH FROM THE MEDITERRANEAN. . .



IT'S STILL UP TO US TO DELAY THE JERRY CONVOY, SIR. . .

OKAY! CLOSE DOWN AND LET'S GET STARTED.

THE GOING WAS TOUGH OVER THE LOOSE STONY GROUND. LIKE ALL DALMATIAN ISLANDS, BRIC WAS MAINLY ROCKY HILLS IN THE CENTRE, WITH ALL LIFE HUDDLED ROUND THE SCANTY COASTLINE FRONTING THE MAINLAND.



I'M NOT GONNA FORGET THIS HUNK O' EUROPE IN A HURRY! IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR MILLICK, I WOULDN'T HAVE COME BACK FOR A MILLION BUCKS!

IF THE JERRIES HAVE CAPTURED MILLICK, I'LL BET HE'S SHOWING 'EM HOW TO RUN A BLITZKREIG BY NOW!

SUDDENLY, IN WHAT APPEARED TO BE DESERTED COUNTRY, THEY WALKED STRAIGHT INTO AN AMBUSH! SHOTS WHISTLED FROM THE SURROUNDING HILLS, FLYING HIGH — AS IF IN WARNING.

HALT!
DON'T MOVE!
WE HAVE YOU COVERED!

HIT THE DIRT!



THE TOMMY-GUNS JERKED UP, SEEKING TARGETS, BUT THE AMBUSHERS WERE INVISIBLE IN A COUNTRY MADE FOR CONCEALMENT.

THROW DOWN
YOUR ARMS—OR
WE SHOOT TO
KILL!

WHOEVER
IT IS, TALKS
ENGLISH!

THAT'S NOT
ENGLISH, BUD—IT'S
AMERICAN—AND BY
JIMINY—I'VE HEARD
THAT VOICE
BEFORE!



BEFORE THEY COULD GRAB HIM, PETE FOLEY WAS OUT IN THE OPEN, YELLING HIS HEAD OFF.

STAN MILLICK —
YOU OLD SON OF A
GUN ! WHERE THE
COTTON-PICKIN'
DAYLIGHTS HAVE
YOU BEEN ?

PETE !
TAKE IT
EASY —

THE MAN WHO CAME OUT AT THE
HEAD OF THE RAVINE WAS FULL-
BEARDED. HE LOOKED LIKE A
PARTISAN, BUT CRASH RECOGNISED
HIM AT ONCE. IT WAS
MILLICK WHO STALKED
DOWN — AS IF HE OWNED
THE PLACE !

I THOUGHT
IT WAS YOU, PETE
FOLEY. I'M SURE
GLAD TO SEE YOU,
PETE, BUT NOT WITH
THIS GANG !

THE SURROUNDING ROCKS BECAME ALIVE WITH PARTISANS — A WILD, CUT-THROAT BUNCH OF PIRATES — AND ALL WITH THE DROP ON THE COMMANDOS.

THAT'S PHONEY TALK, STAN! THESE GUYS ARE BRITISHERS — OUR BUDDIES! WE'VE COME TO FLUSH OUT THE KRAUTS.

DISARM THESE MEN!



CRASH AND JOCK SURRENDERED THEIR WEAPONS ONLY ON THE DIRECT ORDERS OF ADAMS. HE SAW NO FUTURE IN FIGHTING "FRIENDS". IN ANY CASE — THEY WERE SURROUNDED.

GIVE 'EM UP, BOYS. NO ARGUMENTS THAT CAN COME AFTERWARDS.

BUT...SIR! OH, FOR CRYING OUT LOUD!



KREKIC, JEALOUS OF HIS HONOUR, WOULD NOT GIVE UP HIS GUN WILLINGLY. A RIFLE BUTT FELL HIM TO THE GROUND.



CRASH MORGAN FELT ANGER SURGE UP INSIDE HIM. WHATEVER POSITION MILLICK HAD GAINED FOR HIMSELF WITH THE PARTISANS, HE WAS USING IT IN A STRANGE WAY!





COVERED BY THE GUNS OF THE PARTISANS, THE COMMANDOS HAD NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO MOVE. THEIR GEAR WAS PICKED UP BY THEIR CAPTORS. ONLY PETE SEEMED TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO THEIR STRANGE LEADER.



THEY MARCHED ON FOR SEVERAL MILES UNTIL THEY CAME TO AN ODD HOUSE, SURROUNDED BY VINEYARDS. HERE THEY WERE PRODDED INTO THE COURTYARD.

WHAT THE HECK ARE THEY TALKING ABOUT, KREKIC?

THEY SAY WE STAY HERE UNTIL THE CAPTAIN DECIDES. THE CAPTAIN? THAT IS THE AMERICAN.



THEY WAITED IN GROWING IMPATIENCE FOR NEARLY AN HOUR. CAPTAIN ADAMS HAD BEEN TAKEN INTO THE HOUSE BY MILLICK, AND PETE HAD ALSO GONE IN. EVENTUALLY, THE SELF-APPOINTED LEADER OF THE PARTISANS CAME OUT...

LISTEN, YOU GUYS! PETE FOLEY'S TOLD ME WHY YOU'RE HERE. WELL, THE MISSION'S OFF. ...FINISHED! THERE'LL BE NO FIGHTING THE KRAUTS UNTIL I'M GOOD AND READY.

THAT'S CRAZY, MILLICK. THOUSANDS OF LIVES WILL BE LOST UNLESS WE STOP THAT JERRY CONVOY!



BUT MILLICK WOULD NOT LISTEN...



MY FAMILY
CAME FROM THIS ISLAND.
THIS HOUSE WAS OWNED BY
THE BIGGEST LAND OWNER
IN BRIC—THE GUY WHO DROVE
MY OLD MAN OUT. WELL, I'VE
EVENED THE SCORE WITH HIM!

PETE FOLEY JOINED THEM LATER...



MILLICK'S A NUT-CASE! HE
TALKS OF RUNNING BRIC AFTER
THE WAR! I TRIED TO KICK
SENSE INTO HIM—BUT NO GO!
HE'S SHIPPING US OUT
TONIGHT!

TIME WAS SLIPPING BY. THE MISSION WAS NEAR TO
FAILURE. FOOD AND DRINK WAS BROUGHT OUT TO THE
PRISONERS AND MILLICK EVEN BECAME AFFABLE AS HE
STRUTTED ROUND THE COURTYARD. BUT CRASH HAD A
SCHEME. AT CRASH'S SUGGESTION JOCK BROUGHT
OUT HIS BAGPIPES...



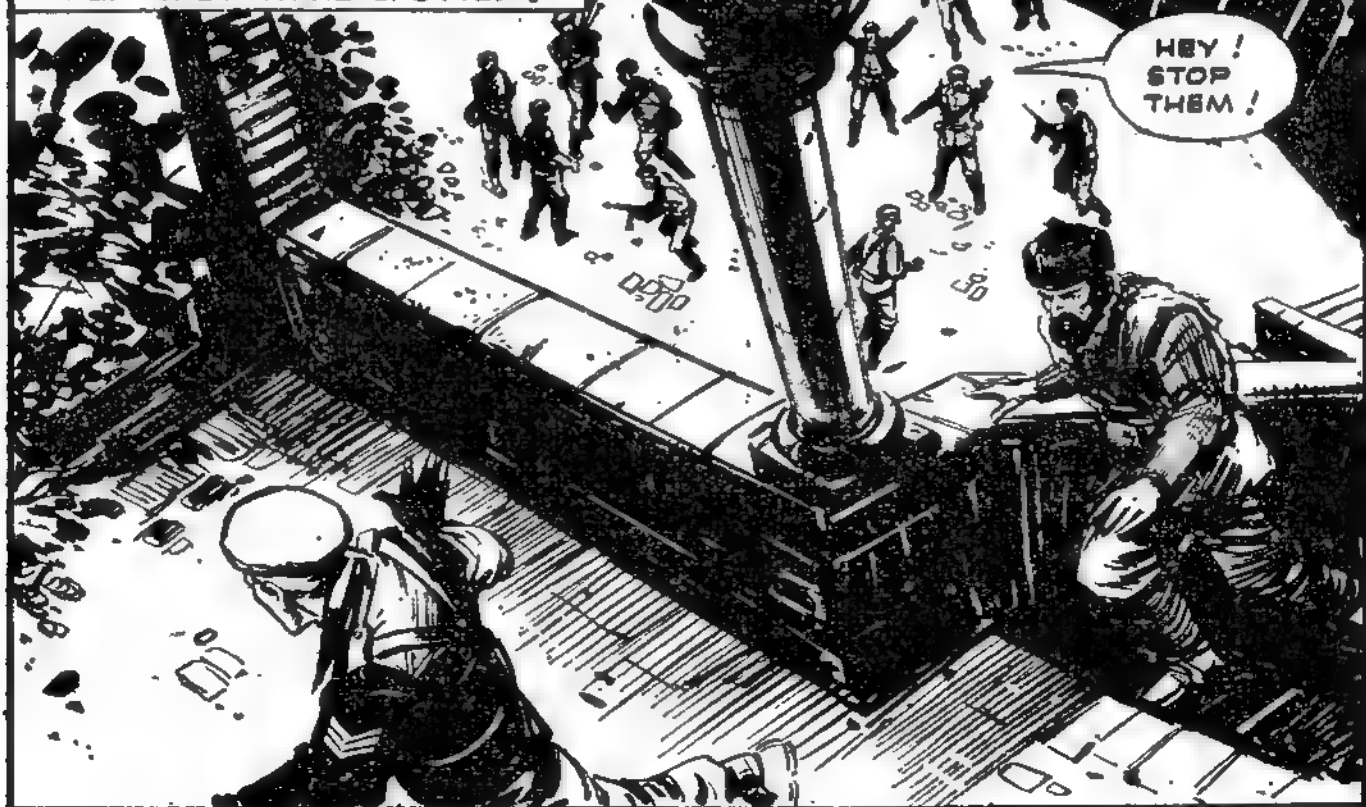
BLOW 'EM
HARD, JOCK—YOU'RE
OUR ONLY CHANCE!

Crossfire

CRASH, PULCING KREKIC WITH HIM, EDGED ROUND TO THE REAR. HE WAS GAMBLING THAT THE DISTRACTION AND THE NOVELTY OF THE PIPES WOULD GIVE THEM A CHANCE —



CRASH AND KREKIC HAD REACHED THE TOP OF THE STONE STAIRWAY WHEN THEY WERE SPOTTED!



THEY SCRAMBLED OVER THE VINE TERRACES, HEADING EAST FOR THE COAST.



FOLLOW ME!
I KNOW THIS
KIND OF
COUNTRY!

OKAY —
BUT KEEP
HEADING FOR
THE TOWN.

THE SURPRISE HAD GAINED THEM MINUTES' START, BUT THE PARTISANS COULD COVER THE GROUND LIKE MOUNTAIN GOATS. IT WAS NOT LONG BEFORE THEY HEARD THE WILD YELLS OF THEIR PURSUERS.



THEY ARE
GAINING! IF THEY
GET WITHIN RANGE
WE SHALL BE SHOT
LIKE DOGS!

LET'S GO
TO EARTH
THEN!

FLATTENED AGAINST THE ROCK FACE, EACH MAN FELT THE PUMPING BEAT OF HIS HEART AS THE YELLING PACK RACED PAST THEM.

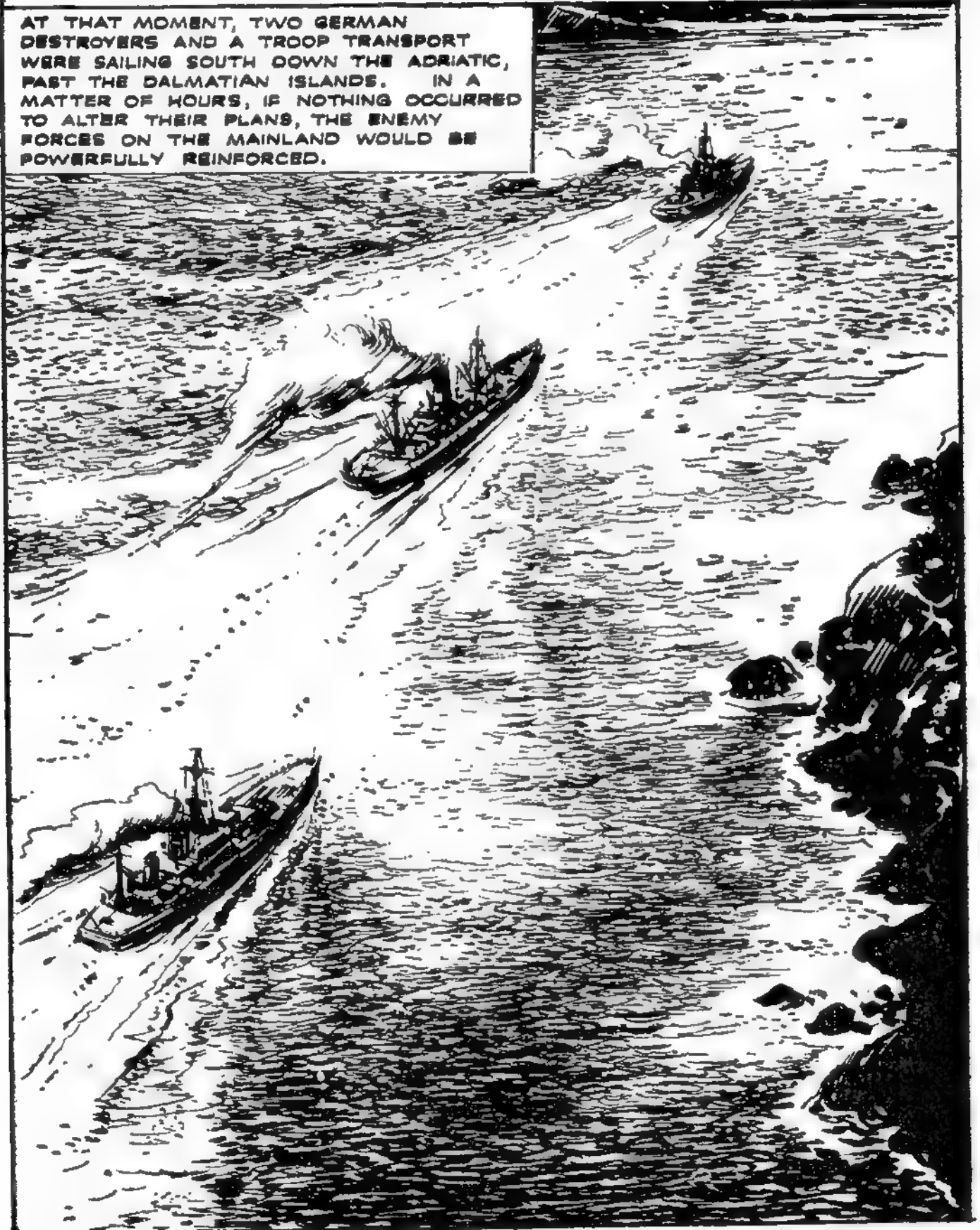


THEY WAITED ONLY UNTIL THE LAST MAN HAD GONE BOUNCING DOWN THE VALLEY, THEN TURNED SOUTH. TWENTY MINUTES LATER, THEY TURNED EAST AGAIN. SOON, BELOW THEM, THEY SAW THE SMALL FISHING TOWN—OCCUPIED BY A GERMAN GARRISON.



Chapter 4. *Petticoat Raid*

AT THAT MOMENT, TWO GERMAN DESTROYERS AND A TROOP TRANSPORT WERE SAILING SOUTH DOWN THE ADRIATIC, PAST THE DALMATIAN ISLANDS. IN A MATTER OF HOURS, IF NOTHING OCCURRED TO ALTER THEIR PLANS, THE ENEMY FORCES ON THE MAINLAND WOULD BE POWERFULLY REINFORCED.



HAVING SUCCESSFULLY DODGED MILLICK'S GUERRILLAS, CRASH AND KREKIC MADE THEIR WAY DOWN TOWARDS THE TOWN. THEY CAME TO A SMALL ISOLATED COTTAGE...

TELL HIM WHO WE ARE, KREKIC. WE NEED HIS HELP AND HE'LL HAVE TO KNOW WHY...



ONCE THEIR IDENTITY WAS KNOWN, THEY RECEIVED ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT FROM THE PATRIOTIC FAMILY. SOON, KREKIC, AND A VERY HEAVILY DISGUISED CRASH WERE LEADING THEIR DONKEY INTO TOWN.

SHORTEN YOUR STEP, CRASH! EVEN THE STUPID GERMANS WOULD SPOT YOU AS A MAN WITH THAT WALK!

PIPE DOWN! I FEEL A PROPER CHARLIE!



NEARER THE POPULATED DISTRICTS, THE TENSION GREW. THE SIGHT OF MILITARY POLICE BLOCKING THEIR ROUTE STOPPED THEM IN THEIR TRACKS.



AS IT HAPPENED IT WAS THE MOST UNNATURAL THING THEY COULD DO ! ON BRIC, WOMEN DID NOT FREQUENT WINE SHOPS.



THE GERMAN SWUNG CRASH ROUND UNCEREMONIOUSLY. THE STUBBLE ON THE COMMANDO'S CHIN CONFIRMED THE NAZI'S SUSPICIONS...



CRASH'S DISGUISE WOULD WORK NO LONGER. NO WOMAN COULD PACK THE THUNDERBOLT RIGHT THAT CRASH SWUNG AT THE GERMAN.



THE WINE-DRINKING LOCALS SAT MESMERISED AS THE BAR ERUPTED INTO VIOLENT ACTION!



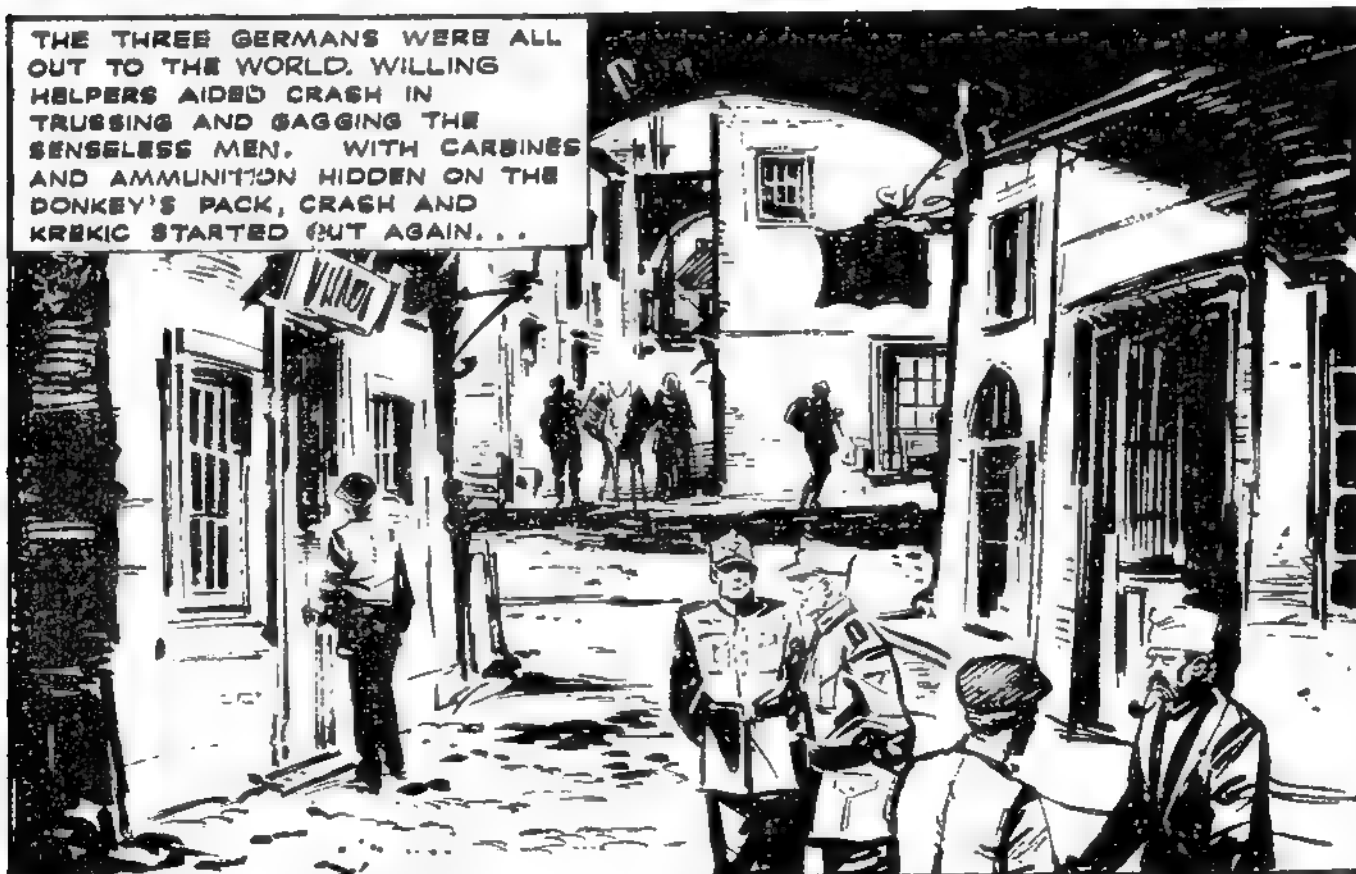
THE COMMANDO LEAPT FOR THE THIRD GERMAN, BUT THE UNACCUSTOMED SKIRTS OF HIS DISGUISE PLAYED HIM FALSE. HE TRIPPED AND FELL HEAVILY. THE GERMAN BROUGHT UP THE BUTT OF HIS WEAPON SAVAGELY...



HIS HEAD BINGING, CRASH LURCHED OVER. THE GERMAN SWUNG UP HIS CARBINE TO FINISH HIM OFF, BUT KREKIC MOVED LIKE QUICKSILVER...



THE THREE GERMANS WERE ALL OUT TO THE WORLD. WILLING HELPERS AIDED CRASH IN TRUSSING AND GAGGING THE SENSELESS MEN. WITH CARBINES AND AMMUNITION HIDDEN ON THE DONKEY'S PACK, CRASH AND KREKIC STARTED OUT AGAIN...



CRASH WAS STILL TRYING DESPERATELY TO THINK OF A WAY TO CAUSE PANDEMONIUM IN THE PORT. IT HAD TO BE SOMETHING VIOLENT TO ATTRACT THE CONVOY THAT NOW MUST BE VERY NEAR...

LOOK—IT'S THE JERRY H.Q.

GOOD! LET'S SHOOT THE COMMANDANT!

BETTER THAN THAT—LET'S GET FIRE TO THE PLACE!



THE TWO SENTRIES WERE ABOUT TO SEND THE INQUISITIVE PEASANT AND HIS WOMAN ON THEIR BUSINESS, WHEN THEY FELT THE HARD MUZZLES OF CARBINES GRATING IN THEIR RIBS.

QUIET! INSIDE—GET MOVING!



IN THE SMALL HALL, THEY DEALT QUIETLY AND EFFICIENTLY WITH THE GUARDIANS OF THE DOOR...



THE GERMAN COMMANDER WAS WORKING LATE. HE JERKED UP ANGRILY AS HIS DOOR CRASHED OPEN.



WHILE KRKIC KEPT THE GERMAN COMMANDER COVERED, CRASH FOUND A PETROL CAN AND SPILLED THE LIQUID AROUND THE LITTERED STOREROOM...



THE PETROL FLAMED AS HE HURLED A MATCH AT IT. BUT CRASH'S LUCK RAN OUT AS HE RAN FOR THE C.O.'S ROOM. THE GUARD COMMANDER HAD MISSED HIS SENTRIES!



IN A MOMENT, THE BUILDING WAS ALIVE WITH ALERTED GERMANS...



THERE WAS NO ESCAPE FROM THE WINDOW. THERE WERE TOO MANY GERMANS OUTSIDE. CRASH HAD RIPPED OFF HIS DISGUISE WHEN THE FIRST ATTACK CAME —



THEY WERE TRAPPED LIKE RATS IN THE BURNING BUILDING !



THE SMOKE WAS EDDYING ALONG THE CORRIDOR, SWIRLING OVER THE BODIES OF THE TWO DEAD GERMANS, WHEN THE SOUND OF SHOTS RANG THROUGH THE BUILDING — AND A FAMILIAR VOICE CALLED OUT...

MORGAN!
KREKIC! WHERE
ARE YOU?

SUFFERING
CATFISH! IT'S
MILICK!



THE RANGER-TURNED-PARTISAN HAD TRACKED THEM DOWN! HE APPEARED IN ANSWER TO CRASH'S CALL, A SCOWL ON HIS FACE.

MILICK!
IN HERE!

YOU JERKS'LL BE
FRIED IN THIS DUMP! GET
OUT AN' HELP YOUR
BUDDIES. THEY'RE BEATING
UP THE TOWN!



BEFORE THEY COULD MAKE ANOTHER MOVE—THE GERMAN COMMANDER MADE A FLYING LEAP FOR THE WINDOW—



MILLICK ELBOWED HIS WAY TO THE SMASHED WINDOW AND OPENED FIRE...



IT WAS PETE FOLEY WHO TOLD THEM WHAT HAD HAPPENED. IN THE EXCITEMENT OF THE CHASE, MILLICK'S MEN HAD VENTURED TOO CLOSE TO THE TOWN. RUNNING INTO THE GERMANS, TWO OF THEM HAD BEEN KILLED.

MILLICK WENT CRAZY! HE RELEASED AND GAVE YOUR BOYS THEIR WEAPONS BACK. THEN—ZOWEE! WE HIT THE KRAUTS—HARD!



THE PARTISANS AND COMMANDOS WERE RINGING THE SMALL TOWN FROM THE HILLS. THE BAZOOKAS AND MORTARS LOBBED THEIR LETHAL LOADS INTO THE LEADING RANKS OF THE ADVANCING GERMANS. LINES OF TRACER BULLETS LANCED THROUGH THE GATHERING DARKNESS.



OUT AT SEA, WHERE DARKNESS HAD SET, THERE WAS EXCITEMENT ON THE BRIDGE OF THE GERMAN DESTROYER...



THE BRITISH AND PARTISANS WERE PULLING BACK STEADILY AS THE GERMANS, OUTNUMBERING THEM, GRADUALLY GOT THE UPPER HAND IN THE TOWN. BACK IN THE RUGGED HILLS, IT WOULD BE A DIFFERENT STORY...



THE HALF-TRACKED VEHICLE COULD CREATE HAVOC AMONG THE RETREATING GUERRILLAS! MILLICK, SNAPPING THE PIN FROM A GRENADE, SUDDENLY STARTED TO RUN TOWARDS IT. ITS MACHINE-GUN'S DEADLY FIRE SWUNG TO MEET THE THREAT. . .

MILLICK!
FOR PETE'S SAKE!
HE'S RUNNING
STRAIGHT INTO
IT!



THE BULLETS THUDDING INTO HIS BODY COULD NOT STOP MILLICK'S MAD RUSH. HE GOT NEAR ENOUGH TO HURL THE GRENADE STRAIGHT AT THE VISOR PLATE OF THE ARMoured CAR. WATCHING, CRASH HAD GOT A BAZOOKA READY. . .

LOADED!

FIRE!



THE GRENADE, HITTING THE ONE VULNERABLE SPOT, HAD HALTED THE ARMOURD CAR. THE SAZOOKA MISSILE COMPLETED ITS DESTRUCTION. BUT THE BODY OF MILLICK LAY STRETCHED ACROSS THE ROADWAY...



THE MAN WHO HAD RETURNED TO THE LAND OF HIS FOREFATHERS HAD NOT LONG TO LIVE WHEN THEY REACHED HIM...



HE SEEMED TO MAKE AN EFFORT— AND THEY LISTENED TO THE HALTING, WHISPERED WORDS...



THEY CARRIED THE BODY WITH THEM AND WERE AWAY IN THE HILLS BEFORE THE GERMAN DESTROYER STEAMED IN, LEAVING THE TRANSPORT AND SISTER DESTROYER STANDING OUT FROM THE HARBOUR.



IT HAD NOT BEEN A LONG DELAY FOR THE CONVOY — BUT IT HAD BEEN A VITAL AND FATAL ONE. AS DAWN BROKE, THE GERMANS WERE OFF THE PORT OF DUBROVICK, BUT THE ROYAL NAVY WAS THERE TOO!



ON THE LONELY HILLS OF BRIC, THEY PAID THEIR LAST RESPECTS TO A MAN, BORN IN THE NEW WORLD, WHO HAD FOUND HIS WAY BACK TO THE OLD — AND WOULD NEVER LEAVE IT AGAIN.

HE WAS A
PIG-HEADED
SON OF A GUN!
BUT HE WAS
MY BUDDY...

SURE, PETE.
MILLICK DIED THE
WAY HE WOULD HAVE
WANTED TO —
FIGHTING FOR
HIS HOME...AND HIS
PEOPLE!



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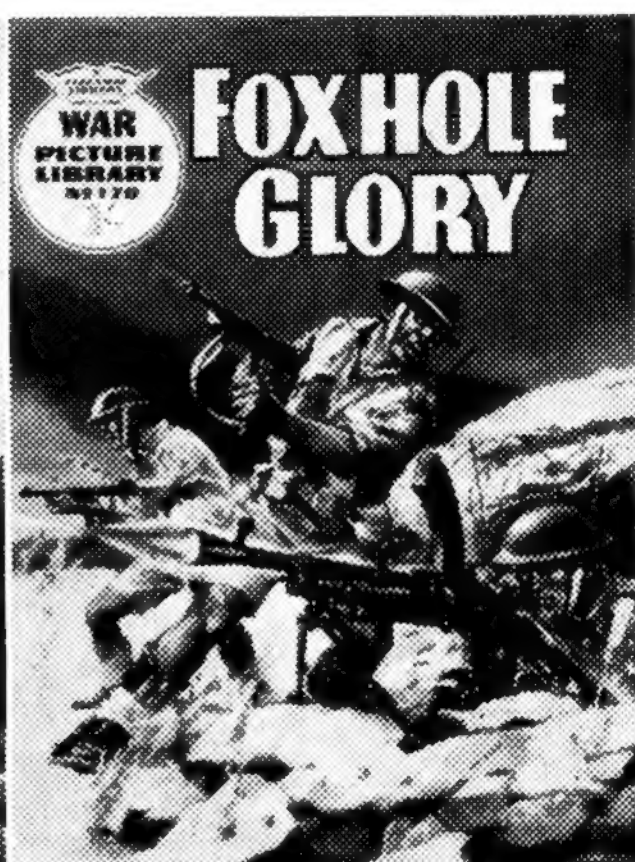
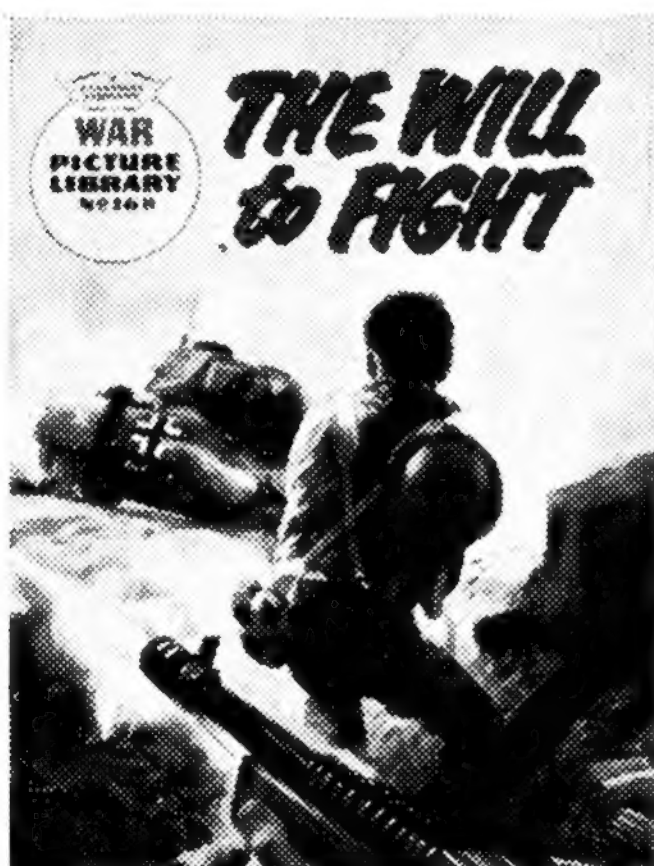
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